United Nations A/C.3/60/SR.1

General Assembly
Sixtieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
21 October 2005

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 3 October 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Buragira ..... (Uganda)

Contents

Statement by the Chairman

Programme of work

Agenda item 61: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly*

Agenda item 62: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family*

Agenda item 63: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

05-53310 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

1. **The Chairman** said that the Committee's agenda for the current session was extensive and included many important items. Dedication and diligence would therefore be required if the Committee was to complete its work. In addition to the allocated agenda items, work was also required on the establishment of the Human Rights Council and its workings and membership. The Committee would have a particularly valuable contribution to make in that regard. Some time had been allotted in the programme of work for informal interactive debates on various aspects of the Committee's work, including human rights, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/316. The Bureau was also exploring the possibility of holding an informal interactive event jointly with the Second Committee.

Programme of work (A/60/250, A/C.3/60/1, A/C.3/60/L.1/Rev.1 and L.1/Add.1/Rev.1)

2. **The Chairman** said that the allocation of agenda items to the Third Committee was contained in document A/C.3/60/1. He drew attention to chapter II of the report of the General Committee (A/60/250), which contained guidelines regarding the conduct of work, relating, among other things, to punctuality, length of statements and rights of reply, and adherence to deadlines imposed for the submission of draft resolutions and inclusion in the list of speakers. He emphasized three guidelines, relating to: (a) the number of resolutions and reports requested of the Secretary-General; (b) the length of resolutions; and (c) the need for delegations to allow sufficient time for estimates of expenditures to be prepared by the Secretariat and considered by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee.

3. It was particularly important for draft resolutions, which generally required lengthy negotiations, to be prepared by the principal sponsors as early as possible. Delegations initiating proposals were further requested to advise the Secretary of the Committee accordingly. In view of the volume of the Committee's work, he requested delegations to maintain discipline and pointed out that, in accordance with the decision of the plenary Assembly, the schedule of meetings from 31 October to 4 November would be adjusted in observance of Ramadan.

4. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee), introducing documents A/C.3/60/L.1/Rev.1 and L.1/Add.1/Rev.1, drew attention to developments in connection with the agenda items allocated to the Committee. First of all, as mentioned in document A/C.3/60/1, the General Assembly had decided to allocate item 116 to all the Main Committees for the sole purpose of considering and taking action on their respective tentative programmes of work. The Committee would not, therefore, be holding a formal debate on that item on Friday, 11 November, as previously planned, and no documents would be submitted on the item. Instead, the Committee would take up item 116 on the last day of its work, scheduled for 23 November. Document A/C.3/60/L.1/Rev.1 should be corrected accordingly. Second, with regard to agenda item 68, the reference in A/C.3/60/L.1/Rev.1 and L.1/Add.1/Rev.1 to the report of the Secretary-General on the status of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations should be deleted, since that document was a biennial report which would be submitted at the next session. Lastly, with regard to items 62 and 63, a communication had been received from Qatar containing the Declaration of the Doha International Conference on Ageing in View of Present-Day Changes, to be issued under the symbol A/60/377-E/2005/92.

5. **Mr. Xie** Bohua (China) pointed out, with reference to agenda items 64 and 65, that the Permanent Representative of China had submitted a document relating to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. He expressed the hope that it would be given due consideration by the Committee.

6. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) confirmed that that document was being processed and would be issued shortly.

7. **The Chairman** said he took it that the Committee wished to accept the programme of work contained in document A/C.3/60/L.1/Rev.1, as orally revised.

8. *It was so decided.*

9. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Committee) read out the list of special rapporteurs and independent experts who wished to present their reports at the current

session. He pointed out that the Chairperson of the Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination would be elected by the Working Group when it met in Geneva from 10 to 14 October 2005.

10. **The Chairman** said he took it that, in accordance with established practice, the Committee wished to approve the list of special rapporteurs and independent experts read out by the Secretary.

11. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 61: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/60/80 and 111)

Agenda item 62: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (A/60/61-E/2005/7, A/60/117/Rev.1, 128, 133 and Corr.1, 138, 155, 156, 290 and A/60/377-E/2005/92)

Agenda item 63: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/60/151 and A/60/377-E/2005/92)

12. **Mr. Sundaram** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development), speaking on behalf of Mr. Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, introduced the *Report on the World Social Situation 2005* (A/60/117/Rev.1), which focused on the theme of inequality. Inequality was inconsistent with the vision set out in the Charter of the United Nations. However, it was becoming increasingly difficult to address and had been exacerbated by various recent developments, particularly globalization. Inequality confounded efforts to eradicate poverty and thus hindered the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It also reflected the persistence of social injustice.

13. Recent trends in inequality were not encouraging. Income inequalities in most countries had widened in recent decades, particularly since the 1990s, and the richest 10 per cent of the world's population received half of total world income. Inequality trends among households at the global level were less clear because of the recent rapid growth in East Asia, especially in China and India, and the relatively slower growth seen in parts of Europe and in Japan.

14. The single most important source of income inequalities was the unequal distribution of wealth at both the national and the international levels. Inequality was also reflected in the global unemployment situation. The number of unemployed people across the world had risen by 31 per cent between 1993 and 2003 to reach 186 million, and the problem of unemployment was exacerbated by deindustrialization, public-sector retrenchment and "jobless growth".

15. Historically, the informal economy had been based on agriculture, but the non-agricultural informal workforce had grown in all regions of the world, particularly with the recent push for greater labour-market flexibility and the corresponding erosion of labour rights. In order to improve conditions in the informal economy, it was important to ensure decent work for all, with the corresponding rights, protection and voice, and to improve the quality of work available, not merely to increase the number of jobs.

16. In recent years, there had been a significant trend towards trade liberalization. However, developed countries' trade barriers continued to harm developing countries. The ability to export helped growth, but there was a need to distinguish between export promotion and trade liberalization in a more general sense. Often, temporary protection was necessary so that new productive capabilities and capacities could be developed. National development strategies were also crucial. For those reasons, trade liberalization should not be reciprocal; special and differential treatment should be preserved, especially for developing countries. There was also increasing recognition that regional and other so-called free-trade agreements tended to widen inequalities among the countries involved.

17. During the twentieth century, the terms of trade had changed to the detriment of developing countries. The prices of primary commodities had declined against the prices of manufactures, especially during the 1980s. The prices of tropical agricultural products had also fallen against those of temperate agricultural products, and the prices of generic manufactures from developing countries had declined against the prices of manufactures associated with strong intellectual property rights, which basically preserved

technological monopolies. Moreover, there was a risk that natural and other resources might not be available for future generations.

18. Because of international financial liberalization, capital flows from capital-rich to capital-poor countries had increased, the cost of finance had gone up and the international system had grown both more volatile and more vulnerable, with less scope for developmental finance. Among the consequences of economic liberalization, he singled out hunger and malnutrition, noting that progress compared unfavourably with earlier decades. Moreover, inequality was being transmitted from one generation to the next because of the rising generation's inability or unwillingness to support older persons.

19. Globalization had brought about some homogenization of production and consumption patterns, which available resources could not sustain. Corporations were wielding increased influence, consumer choices were becoming more limited and unhealthy dietary practices were spreading, leading to a worldwide rise in non-communicable diseases.

20. Violence and conflict were often rooted in inequality, authoritarian regimes, poverty and exclusion, while inequality was a contributing factor in social disintegration and violence. It was therefore necessary to foster democracy as a continual process. Governments had a unique and essential role in that regard, in particular by eliminating institutionalized inequalities, encouraging political participation and embracing diversity as a source of enrichment and empowerment. They needed to improve access to education, health care and social protection, notably by giving higher priority to the financing of key social services, resisting strong pressure to decrease government spending in favour of the private sector. Indeed, Governments not only provided less social protection, but also applied less progressive — and even regressive — tax systems, making once again for greater inequality.

21. After welcoming the increased engagement of civil society in public affairs, at both national and international levels, he stressed the need to address global asymmetries with a view to ensuring an equitable distribution of the benefits of an increasingly open world economy, while seeking to promote democracy, the rule of law and social protection in the interests of greater inclusion, equity and social integration.

22. **Mr. Schölvinck** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/60/80). It reflected the deliberations at the high-level segment of the Commission for Social Development and centred on three core issues: eradicating poverty, promoting full employment and fostering social integration.

23. The report noted that progress in achieving the Copenhagen goals had been largely uneven and that far-reaching efforts were still needed, in particular to mitigate the negative effects of globalization and address unfavourable trade relationships between developed and developing countries. He referred in that connection to the Declaration on the Tenth Anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development (E/CN.5/2005/L.2) which was significant in that it recognized that the implementation of the Copenhagen Commitments and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals were mutually reinforcing.

24. Turning to the *Report on the World Social Situation 2005* (A/60/117/Rev.1), already discussed by the previous speaker, he stressed that addressing the inequality predicament required a broad-based approach that should be part of any comprehensive development strategy and go beyond approaches centred on economic growth.

25. As for the first report of the Secretary-General on the World Youth Report 2005 (A/60/61-E/2005/7), it provided an overview of the situation of young people around the world under three rubrics: youth in the global economy; youth in civil society; and youth at risk. It highlighted the ever-more complex challenges facing the young and called on Governments to evaluate their youth policies continuously, with the involvement of young people, so as to ensure they remained relevant. To that end, it recommended the development of a set of verifiable indicators and improved synergies among relevant United Nations system activities.

26. The Committee also had before it the Secretary-General's report entitled "Making commitments matter: young people's inputs to the 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year

2000 and Beyond" (A/60/156). One frequently noted observation that it contained related to the fulfilment of basic human rights as a key means of improving the situation of young people. Another was a call for cross-sectoral national youth policies, developed in collaboration with young people.

27. The third report on youth before the Committee (A/60/133), summarizing the findings of a longer report on youth employment by the International Labour Organization, found that no single policy could be applied across the board to all countries and that there was too much concern with supply-side policies and not enough being done to stimulate demand for jobs. Youth employment should not be treated as a target group issue but should be promoted as part of efforts to improve the situation of all age groups within the labour market. He noted the importance of elements beyond national borders that were governed by international practices and policies and referred in that connection to the Youth Employment Network, which had become a forum for building consensus around economic and social policies and for dialogue between young people and policymakers. Serious consideration and support should also be given to the proposal of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change for a major new policy and action-oriented initiative on the links between youth employment and collective security.

28. The Secretary-General's report on cooperatives in social development (A/60/138) focused on the role of cooperatives in poverty eradication, arguing that their social responsibility and concern for the community made them a useful model for promoting the empowerment of the poor and their participation in poverty-reduction strategies. It emphasized, however, that cooperatives needed to adapt to the new realities of the global market place.

29. The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family was the subject of another report of the Secretary-General (A/60/155), on which it offered several suggestions, including national mechanisms to coordinate policies and practices and the integration of a family perspective into United Nations system activities, including the establishment of focal points.

30. The Secretary-General's report on the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/60/290), dealt successively with the international policy framework on disability; progress towards the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities; initiatives aimed at promoting a disability perspective in development; and actions to improve accessibility at the United Nations.

31. Under item 63, on the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons, the Secretary-General's report (A/60/151) contained recommendations to promote implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action, including a call for an advocacy campaign, which the Committee might wish to consider in order to underline the situation of older persons in ongoing efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals.

32. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that the General Committee would not disconnect social issues and policies from the economic realm when allocating agenda items among the various Committees.

33. **Mr. Leigh** (United Nations Volunteers, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) recalled General Assembly resolution 57/106, which recognized the importance of volunteerism in enhancing social and economic development.

34. The Secretary-General's report (A/60/128) considered progress made in the areas highlighted in that resolution from the perspective of the four goals of the 2001 International Year of Volunteers, namely, recognition, promotion, networking and facilitation of volunteerism. He noted increased momentum in those directions, and important steps had been taken to have the economic contribution of volunteerism better understood and brought to the attention of policymakers.

35. There were, however, notable variations between countries and regions and within the United Nations system. Areas where further effort was required included awareness-raising among policymakers in developing countries and in donor countries and more promotional work, especially in linking up with the Millennium Development Goals, as well as supportive legislative and fiscal frameworks and expanded private-sector involvement. He also emphasized the value of broad-based participation, which entailed access to opportunities to volunteer for all segments of the population.

36. **Mr. Ndimeni** (South Africa) said that natural disasters often had a devastating effect on communities and required massive intervention to assist the

population. He wondered whether there had been any attempt to develop a collective approach to mitigating the effects of natural disasters.

37. **Mr. Schölvinck** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development) replied that natural disasters were difficult to predict and it was therefore difficult to develop mechanisms to prevent them. From an operational point of view, the provision of assistance and relief following a natural disaster was the responsibility of the United Nations system as a whole, not that of his Division. The tsunami in Asia had affected mostly low-lying tourist destinations; the effects of the disaster on the social inequalities that could be related a tourism-based economy, however, could of course be looked into.

38. **Mr. Leigh** (United Nations Volunteers, UNDP) noted that often volunteers were the first responders in the case of a natural disaster but stressed the need for their efforts to be properly organized and supported. The World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe had stressed the need to promote the use of volunteers from local populations in responding to natural disasters.

39. **Mr. Sundaram** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development) stressed that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was the lead agency in responding to natural disasters. His department had, however, provided advice to OCHA following the tsunami in 2004 and had provided specific advice for disaster preparedness in the period leading up to hurricane Katrina. He also cited the example of Bangladesh, which despite being a poor country, had developed a sophisticated system for disaster preparedness which offered many lessons for the international community.

40. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to begin its general discussion of agenda items 61, 62 and 63.

41. **Mr. Wood** (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia and Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine aligned themselves with his statement.

42. He said the European Union welcomed the commitment shown by the Commission for Social Development, which, on the tenth anniversary of the Copenhagen Summit, had focused on the implementation of the latter's outcomes and reiterated the importance of a comprehensive approach to social development at the international and national levels based on international cooperation, national action and a global dialogue on social issues.

43. Employment and the promotion of decent work should be fundamental components of poverty reduction and development strategies. Decent work could be a key route out of poverty and an important factor in social inclusion and integration. The conclusions of the high-level segment had stressed the need for employment policies to promote decent work under conditions of equity, security and dignity and the need to incorporate job creation into macroeconomic policy. In March 2000, at the Lisbon meeting of the European Council, European leaders had committed themselves to a 10-year programme of economic reform designed to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

44. The high-level panel on employment of the Commission for Social Development had noted that regrettably the link between employment and poverty reduction had not been highlighted in international policy discussions. The international community must recognize that link during international and national policy discussions; full and productive employment and decent work should be a central policy objective for all Member States and an integral part of poverty-reduction strategies aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals and supporting fair globalization.

45. The Millennium Development Goal for poverty reduction would not be achieved by 2015. More and better aid was needed, delivered through real partnerships between donor and developing countries, along with fairer trade and a focus on the special needs of Africa, in order to empower the poor. Special attention must also be given to child- and maternal-health goals, where little progress had been made. A target and indicators for reproductive health would help the international community monitor progress towards many of the Millennium Development Goals. He welcomed the reaffirmation by the millennium review summit of the importance of attaining the goal of universal access to sexual and reproductive health, as set out in the Cairo Programme of Action.

46. Each developing country must take primary responsibility for its own developments and prepare an

ambitious national poverty-reduction strategy taking into account the human-rights dimension of poverty, promote good governance and ensure accountability and transparency in public- and private-sector management. Those efforts should be supported by more resources and better development opportunities, including: allocation by donor countries of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for development assistance; innovative financing mechanisms; increased debt relief where necessary; and support for the Doha Development Agenda.

47. In the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the European Union had committed itself to making its aid more effective including by supporting developing countries' own priorities and systems whenever possible. The European Union in May 2005 had agreed to double its aid by 2010, with 15 members committed to reaching the 0.7 per cent target by 2015. Significant steps had also been taken to reduce the debt burden of the most heavily indebted poor countries. That vision and energy for poverty elimination should be carried forward to assist in the successful completion of the Doha Round in December.

48. The European Union attached great weight to social cohesion as well as to economic growth and improving labour markets, that had been made clear in the Lisbon goals. Its vision for Europe was of a Union where everyone could make the most of his or her abilities and where no one was held back by poverty or social exclusion. That would require effective action, while respecting national traditions and social systems, to tackle inequality and in particular to ensure better access to employment.

49. While employment was at the heart of the European Union's social inclusion strategies, many other policies and services were needed to ensure social cohesion. All organizations which could assist in the task of ensuring that social protection, health and education systems supported those who were at risk of social exclusion must be mobilized. Using commonly agreed indicators would increase understanding of the causes of social exclusion and help identify and share good practices with the goal of having a decisive impact on poverty by 2010. He supported the Commission for Social Development's call for universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest possible standard of mental and physical health and access for all to primary health care as part of the effort to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration.

50. He welcomed the progress made by the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. The European Union looked forward to a fruitful continuation of those negotiations and stressed the need for the continued participation of NGOs in those negotiations in order to formulate a strong and effective convention.

51. The issue of demographic change was of great interest to the European Union. The world was facing an unprecedented demographic transition with the greatest and most rapid increase taking place in the developing countries, with potentially massive implications for all societies. The European Union therefore fully supported the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and was combating age discrimination in employment through a European directive on equal treatment which required Member States to introduce legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, religion and belief, and disability.

52. The European Union also welcomed the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the implementation of the International Year of Volunteers (A/60/128), in particular his reassurances that the momentum built up in 2001 continued to foster a vibrant volunteer movement. That momentum was reflected across the European Union in initiatives taken by Member States in partnership with community organizations. The European Union noted, however, the Secretary-General's assessment that there were wide variations at the country and regional levels and agreed that further effort was needed to sustain and extend progress so that the potential of volunteerism was fully realized in all countries.

53. He expressed support for the forthcoming plenary Assembly discussions on youth, specifically the event celebrating the tenth anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The European Union looked forward to participating actively in those discussions. Youth policy was gaining increasing prominence in the European Union, and the European Youth Pact had been adopted at the spring 2005 session of the European Council, as part of the revised Lisbon

strategy focusing on growth and jobs in recognition of the importance of improving the education, training, mobility and vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans.

54. The European Union welcomed the Commission for Social Development's work on the implementation of the Copenhagen Summit and its commitment to pursuing follow-up to the Summit. The Commission provided a key forum for taking forward the international social development agenda in the United Nations system, and the European Union was committed to ensuring that the Commission fulfilled its role effectively and strengthened its voice as an authoritative, relevant and respected United Nations body. It would continue to play a full and active role in further discussions on reform of the Commission in February 2006.

55. **Mr. Neil** (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recalled that implementation of international social-development commitments remained a priority for the developing world. The 10-year review of the Copenhagen Summit by the Commission for Social Development had provided an opportunity to assess the level of implementation. The relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/60/80), noted the mutually reinforcing nature of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Millennium Declaration, especially in relation to the three core priorities of the Copenhagen agenda: the eradication of poverty, the promotion of social integration and the attainment of full employment.

56. The results of poverty reduction efforts had been mixed, but he was convinced that the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015 remained achievable. That possibility justified the focus of international support on Africa, in particular the sub-Saharan region.

57. The obstacles to achieving the Copenhagen goals were rooted in the lack of an enabling environment for social development. The main obstacles were: natural disasters; the spread of infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS and malaria; security concerns, including armed conflict, occupation, terrorism, and unilateral coercive measures; the unequal opportunities created by globalization; and continuing inequities in the global economic system. He noted, however, that except for natural disasters, none of those obstacles was beyond the international community's ability to change.

58. Social-development goals nevertheless could not be achieved without adequate resources and he stressed that realization of the commitment of 0.7 per cent of GDP for official development assistance could make a significant difference. Domestic resource mobilization for investment in social infrastructure must, however, complement official development assistance; mechanisms such as cooperatives could play an important role in promoting the eradication of poverty, fostering social integration and creating employment. He therefore welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on cooperatives and social development (A/60/138) and the recommendations contained therein.

59. Employment levels globally had fallen short of expectations. The *Report on the World Social Situation 2005* indicated that between 1993 and 2003 the number of unemployed had risen. Youth unemployment constituted a particular challenge and should be a focus of the 10-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

60. The review of the Copenhagen outcome in February 2005 had provided a welcome opportunity to interact with representatives of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the International Labour Organization on the issue of social development. Such opportunities for dialogue between the various stakeholders in social development could lead to tangible outcomes.

61. He welcomed the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (A/60/151) and efforts at the national level to implement the Madrid Plan of Action. However, the report also noted the tendency to address the situation of older persons from a "humanitarian" perspective, while ignoring their potential to contribute to national objectives. He stressed the need for national commitment and international cooperation to implement the Madrid Plan of Action, particularly with regard to national capacity-building. To that end, Member States should support the United Nations Trust Fund for Ageing in order to meet the needs of particular States.

62. Two points were particularly important for the Group of 77 and China. First, poverty-reduction policies must address the root causes of poverty and

global policies should promote international and bilateral cooperation, including the transfer of technology and the sharing of experiences and good practices taking into account the gender and age dimensions of poverty. Secondly, efforts must be intensified to help countries achieve social-development goals by providing technical and financial resources and to reduce their debt burden in order to free up resources for social programmes.

63. **Ms. Rahantabololo** (Madagascar), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), expressed concern that the international community was still far behind schedule in realizing the goals of the Copenhagen Summit. Poverty had continued to increase, and the ranks of the unemployed and underemployed continued to grow, especially in the developing countries, while progress towards social integration remained painfully slow and uneven. The technology and resources nevertheless existed to make the right to development a reality and to free the human race from want. That could only be achieved, however, through concerted efforts to promote poverty eradication and the goals of full employment and social integration.

64. In March 2004, SADC had launched a Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan which prioritized social development as a core concern; operational frameworks over 5- and 15-year periods had been developed. The three major intervention areas were: developing and sustaining human capabilities; developing positive cultural values, attitudes and practices; and utilization of human capabilities. Furthermore, in 2004, SADC had established a Ministerial Forum to better coordinate social-development efforts, in keeping with the social dimension of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

65. Those efforts had led to increased human development, with some Member States achieving annual growth rates of 7 and 8 per cent of GDP, which would contribute greatly to meeting the target of halving poverty by 2015. In some countries, primary-education enrolment and adult literacy had increased markedly. That demonstrated that SADC member States, in spite of limited resources, were committed to social development.

66. Daunting human development challenges nevertheless remained. Against a background of low economic growth, humanitarian crises, HIV/AIDS and limited resources, the human-development index for the region had dropped, especially with regard to per capita income and life expectancy. Severe drought also threatened the lives of nearly 10 million people. While thanking the United Nations system and other donors for the invaluable assistance provided for drought relief, she stressed the urgent need for greater assistance.

67. SADC recognized that young people were a force for development, peace and democracy, yet millions of young people lived in poverty, were illiterate, unemployed or living with HIV/AIDS. The international community's commitment to realizing the goals of the World Programme of Action for Youth must therefore be strengthened and implemented, with the participation of youth.

68. Guided by the African Union Policy on Ageing of 2002, SADC was committed to protecting the health and well-being of older persons and guaranteeing them an enabling environment. Lack of basic health care and nutrition remained a pressing problem and the elderly were often overwhelmed by the extra burden of orphaned grandchildren and home care for family members largely because of HIV/AIDS, poverty and conflicts. Despite a lack of resources and capacity, however, the Community remained committed to successful implementation of the Plan of Action on Ageing, in cooperation with the United Nations.

69. She expressed support for the speedy conclusion of an international instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, which was long overdue. She also underscored the need to better integrate economic and social policies in order to promote social development and root out poverty.

70. **Mr. Mayoral** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that political and development strategies should focus on youth, family, the elderly and persons living with disabilities. With respect to youth, the Rio Group hoped that the forthcoming ten-year review of the World Programme of Action for Youth would inspire a considerable number of young delegates to participate in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly as part of the national delegations. With regard to the family, the Rio Group would continue its efforts to enhance the well-being of the family in its multisectoral and coordinated public policies. The Rio Group fully supported the Secretary-

General's recommendation that it should broaden its cooperation with the United Nations system in order to strengthen national capabilities and integrate the family perspective into the activities of the system.

71. The Rio Group reiterated its commitment to the involvement of the elderly in society and to the dissemination and implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and agreed with the Secretary-General that the situation of the elderly should be taken into account in future initiatives.

72. The Rio Group supported the drafting of an international convention to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, which was currently in the final stages of negotiation. The convention would be the first human-rights instrument of the twenty-first century and required special creativity on the part of the United Nations, particularly in the areas of monitoring and cooperation. The Rio Group also supported in general the conclusions in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, and deemed it imperative to incorporate the perspective of disabilities in all development and cooperation programmes.

73. The Rio Group considered that the 2005 World Summit Outcome provided a base from which the United Nations must continue to work, and committed itself to participating in the development and implementation of the mandates contained therein.

74. **Ms. Che** Ying (China) said that the achievement of the development goals in areas such as the elimination of poverty and the promotion of economic and social development required broad cooperation at the global level. Although encouraging progress had been made since the adoption of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, disease, poverty and unemployment still hindered the development of many developing countries. Developed countries should do more to assist the developing countries by reducing and eliminating debt, expediting the transfer of technology and abandoning trade protectionism.

75. The United Nations had made important progress in the field of social development, particularly with regard to vulnerable groups. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 had been extremely useful in that it served as a model for the international community in dealing with the situation of older persons and the question of ageing.

76. The Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities had made substantial progress and had attracted the universal attention of Governments and non-governmental organizations. The Chinese Government believed that the Convention would provide an effective legal guarantee of the rights and interests of persons with disabilities and hoped that all parties would work for an early conclusion of the negotiations.

77. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) said that progress in achieving the core objectives of the Copenhagen Summit had been uneven. Countries needed to increase their efforts to eradicate poverty, boost employment and achieve social integration. Other challenges included eliminating the asymmetries of globalization, creating new financial resources through increased official development assistance, resolving armed conflicts and increasing investments in the social sector.

78. In Pakistan, poverty reduction remained the primary objective of the Government's reform agenda, incorporating a more focused human-development strategy and a central role for provincial and local governments.

79. Although the macroeconomic reform agenda had yielded unprecedented growth of 8 per cent of GDP during 2004-2005, there was a need for social integration of vulnerable segments of society. With that in mind, the Government had promoted the distribution of State land to landless tenants, easy availability of credit, and relief to drought-affected areas.

80. On the international level, development remained the highest priority for a large majority of Member States. It was therefore necessary to build upon the recommendations of the 2005 World Summit regarding ODA targets, debt relief, increased aid and the special needs of Africa.

81. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) said that the 1986 Declaration on the Right to Development had played a key role in promoting the issue of social development. Since the Copenhagen Summit, the right to development had come to be accepted as a basic human right and the link between social and economic development had

been strengthened. However, if the Copenhagen objectives of eliminating poverty, disease and unemployment were to be achieved, it would be necessary to mobilize political will and strengthen international cooperation. Egypt was pleased that the international community had renewed its commitments at the World Summit and hoped that they would be translated into policies and programmes. Unfortunately, little progress had been made in the areas of debt mitigation for middle-income countries, climate change and the transfer of technology.

82. With respect to the occupied Palestinian territories, Israel's policy of closure and blockade had undermined social development, particularly regarding the rights of women, children and the family, and had aggravated socio-economic conditions in Palestinian cities.

83. At home, Egypt was striving to create a social, economic and political climate that would facilitate the implementation of an integrated strategy based on partnership between government bodies, civil society and the private sector. Health and education services had been upgraded; life expectancy had risen; and the number of women in the workforce had doubled. Egyptians were permitted greater freedom of expression, and the Constitution had been amended to allow citizens to elect a president by popular vote and choose from a variety of candidates. Egypt was still seeking, within that strategy, to combat poverty by focusing on reduction of unemployment, support for small and medium enterprises, youth programmes and support for older persons and the disabled.

84. **Mr. Cumberbatch Miguén** (Cuba) said that economic and social development had suffered an outright setback during the previous year and that the United Nations had failed to reaffirm the outcome of its latest summits and conferences. Poverty continued to be a chronic problem; external debt had not been decreased; the HIV/AIDS pandemic had not been checked; millions of children died every year from preventable diseases; and the trade barriers that prevented developing countries from accessing important resources for their domestic social agendas had not been removed.

85. The Cuban Government remained fully committed to protecting its workers and guaranteeing the pensions of retired persons and the disabled, and had allocated two thirds of the 2005 State budget to upgrading education, health services, social assistance and scientific and technical research. The Government had achieved much in the field of social development, despite the continuing economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States. In fact, the United States policy regarding Cuba constituted the main obstacle to the achievement of Cuba's social-development goals.

86. The Cuban Government was of the opinion that international cooperation on social development should be adapted to the programmes and priorities of the recipient nations and to the local culture. Cuba itself was actively assisting rural populations in Africa, Asia and Latin America by providing health-care professionals, scholarships, literacy consultants and other services, without exerting political pressure or demanding economic privileges.

87. In conclusion, Cuba called upon the Member States to reaffirm the objective of achieving equitable development and to make every effort to change the current international order wherein the wealth of the world was owned by a privileged few.

88. **Ms. Erard** (Switzerland), speaking on item 61, said that, although her Government welcomed the progress made since the Copenhagen Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, greater efforts were needed to ensure that the objectives were fully attained. One of the priorities, as outlined at the 2005 World Summit, was full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people. In order to attain that objective, education and training must be accessible to all persons, young women in particular. Rights at the workplace, social protection and social dialogue should likewise be guaranteed. Another priority was the social integration of vulnerable groups; Switzerland hoped that Governments would strive to develop policies guaranteeing them basic services, employment and health services.

89. With respect to the fight against poverty, it was important to take into account each country's level of development, intensify international cooperation and adopt monetary and budgetary policies that offset the negative effects of globalization on social development. Switzerland strongly favoured an approach integrating economic, social and environmental policies, at both national and international levels.

90. Finally, it was vital that various entities such as the World Bank and the International Labour Organization, regional commissions, civil society, the private sector and Governments continued their cooperation to attain the objectives of social development.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.